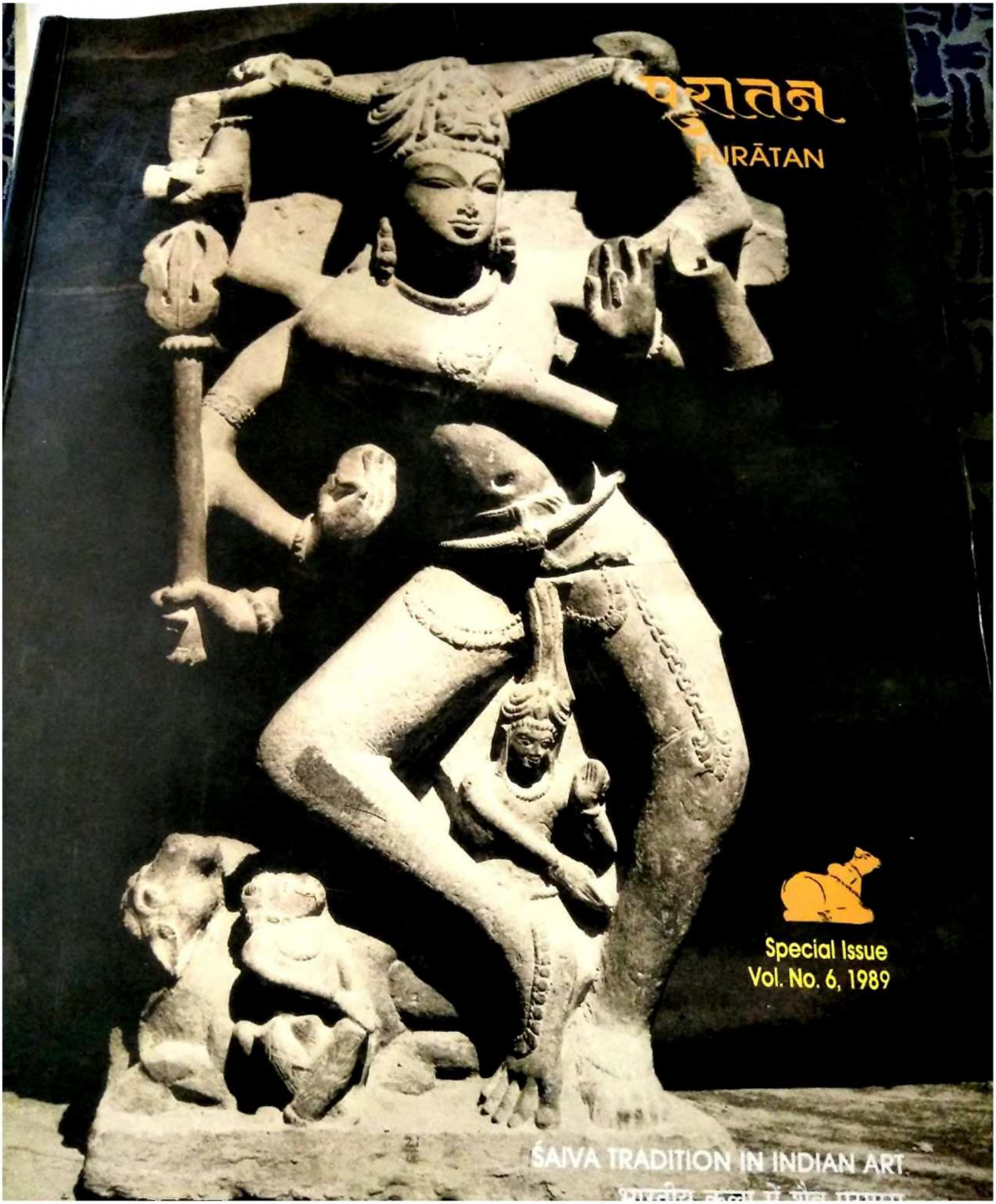

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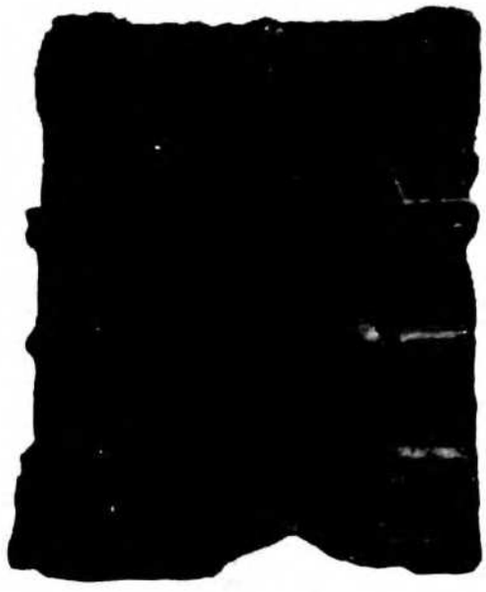
ŚAIVA TRADITION IN INDIAN ART



Chief Editor's Note

The present compilation of articles investigates the Śaiva tradition in India both at abstract philosophical and concrete inconographic levels, both in iconic and non-iconic forms, in geographical space and sequential time . The tradition has been explained in its denotative aspect as the fertility cult and in its connotative aspect as celebration of the creation of the universe. Paintings, sculpture and architecture, terracotta and stone images, coins, literary and epigraphic references have been examined in order to explore the multiple forms of Śiva and the multivalence of meanings to which the Śaiva tradition lends itself. Interaction of Śaiva, Buddhist, Jaina and other Brahmanical traditions has been examined and impact of Śaivism on the formation of indigenous and esoteric sects has been analysed.

Using Āgamic texts and different iconographic types Vinay Shukla shows how the Śaiva images have to be seen as no more works of art but as meditational constructs, used to surpass duality of empyric form. The images, he explains, are instrumental in the blossoming of awareness in jīva of its true nature, "like the revival of memory in a reawakened person". They also enact the fusion of matter and spirit, light and sound, continuity and change and the evolution and devolution of the universe.

Exploring the concept further S.P. Basu declares Śiva to be the father of the sciences in their constructive and destructive manifestations, as progenitor of agriculture, architecture, linguistics, medicine and war. While looking for near-eastern parallels of Śaivism as a fertility cult, he establishes the worship of phallus as primarily the worship of symbols, and secondarily, of genitalia. S.R. Kulkarni discusses the continuing vogue of phallic cults in the prevalence of prehistoric and historic ring stones, mother goddess figurines and other artefacts. K.P. Shukla and N.K. Choudhuri, on the other hand, adduce literary evidence from Vedic and later Sanskritic traditions to challenge the conventional explanation of Liṅga and Yoni as obscene, non-vedic, phallic objects. While Shukla explains the Liṅga as a powerful columnar symbol, present in Indian imagination from early days, Choudhuri explains Liṅga and Yoni respectively as sign and source, with both concrete elemental and abstract, nonmaterial aspects.

Several authors have discussed the evolution of the Śaiva tradition in India and Magna India. B. Suryavamshi establishes the co-existence of iconic and aniconic forms of Śiva from the early days. P.K. Agrawala makes an extensive discussion of Liṅgas and Mukhaliṅgas from museums in different parts of the world, form numismatic depictions and from actual sites. Wakankar mentions prehistoric Śiva and proto-Śiva images found at Nippur, Chanhudaro, and, in Madhya Pradesh, from Dangawada and Navdatoli excavations. K.D. Bajpai expatiates on the myriad forms and roles of Śiva ganas in Central India and discusses coins displaying Śiva.

A few articles move from a discussion of the general evolution of the Śaiva tradition to its specific manifestations in compact geographical areas. Bansilal Malla describes the evolution of Śaiva worship in Kashmir from Ashokan days. K.K. Bisoi and A.V. Narasimha Murthy analyse the evolution of Śaiva worship respectively in Orissa and Karnataka under dynastic patronage through the ages. Vibha Misra looks at terracotta Śaiva images from U.P. and North Bengal, while K.S. Shukla examines terracotta Śaiva heads, mainly form Newal in Unnao district.

The examination of the specific articulations of the Śaiva tradition is carried into the field of painting as well, Sandhya Pandey discusses memories of the contemplative gravity of Ajanta paintings in the Śiva heads of Nandalal Bose of Bengal. Daljeet adumbrates on Śaiva themes in the Tanjore and Mysore paintings of Maratha and Wodeyer periods in Tamilnadu and Karnataka. Rai Anand Krishna describes paintings from Western Jammu and Eastern Gaḍhwāl between the 17th and 19th centuries. He presents us with tableaux of Śiva and Śiva parivāra, engrossed in daily domestic pursuits in a rather humorous vein. He also offers very perceptive and sensitive comments about the deeply evocative, amorous, emotional contents of a Gadhwālī painting.

The architectural evolution of Śaiva temples is charted in a few articles. B.L. Nagarch describes four twelth century A.D. Śiva temples at Barukheda near Neemuch in Madhya Pradesh. Narayan Vyas describes a Paramāra Bhūmija temple near Harsud, while Rahul K. Singh discusses the architecture of Śaiva temples in Daksina Kośala. P.K. Trivedi speaks of 13th century Nīlakantha Mahādeva temple at Bavka in Panch Mahal district in Gujarat. Shrivastava offers his comments on Śiva temples in Bundelkhand, comprising areas from Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. Sadhana Nayak lists out the Śiva temples of Madhya Pradesh.

Another group of articles presents the development of the Śaiva tradition through the evolution of iconography. Some of these gauge the development in Madhya Pradesh. Devangana Desai has identified a hydraheaded, multi-armed and multi-legged image in the Khajuraho site museum as an 11th century A.D. image of Sadāśiva Catuṣpāda. S.S. Yadav discusses the iconographic traits of 6th-7th century A.D. Somavaṁśī Śaivite sculptures from Durg District of Madhya Pradesh. R.A. Sharma places the Śaivite sculpture of Barahed in Bhind District in the context of pre-Gurjara Pratihāra art of the region. O.P. Misra describes 10th century A.D. Māheśhwarī from Bhanpura in Mandsaur. Prakashendra Mathur informs us about the Paramāra Śiva images of Ashapuri in Raisen District, Shashi Chourasia about the Ardhanārīśvara images of Madhya Pradesh, Kusum Kumari Jaiswal about 12 forms of Gourī from Hinglajgarh in Mandsaur, G.L. Raikwar about Śiva images from Tala and Ratanpur in Bilaspur and B.L. Rajpurohit about the Mahakāla image from Ujjain. Shanker Tiwari describes the stalagmites wrought geomorphically in the subterranean lime stone bed of Gupansar stream in Bastar District of Madhya Pradesh as Svayambhū Liṅgas. N.P. Joshi uses texts like Aparājitaprchha to explain the 10th-11th century A.D. Gwallor museum stone slabs with multiple rows of images and Liṅgas as a description of the holy city of Varanasi.

A few other articles tell us about the iconographic developments outside Madhya Pradesh. V.R. Mitragotri explores, through an acute analysis of the Rāval Nātha stotra, the characteristics of Rāval Nātha and then of Renukā Nātha as forms of Śiva in Goa and Konkan. T.K. Biswas describes a 11th-12th century A.D. Harihara image in Bharat Kala Bhavan, Banaras, N. Harinarayana Tripurāntaka images in Madras Government Museum and S.N. Pandey Naṭarāja images from Somanath temple in Gujarat. C. Krishna lists Nandī images from all over India and also the various form of Nandī. H.G. Shastri mentions Lakuliśa and Harihara-Pitāmaha-Arka images from Gujarat, while P.C. Parikh discusses some unique images of Mahisāsuramardinī and Bhairava, also from Gujarat. I.K. Sarma elucidates the sensuous Iksāvaku idiom of the 6th-7th century A.D. polycephalous Rudra image from Peddavegi in ancient Vengī from Andhra Pradesh.

The making of the Śaiva tradition is also scrutinised in a few essays in the history of sectarian cults. S.K. Pathak describes the images of the great Śaiva devotees of the south, which inaugurate the cult of devotion. R.N. Misra briefs us about the organisation of monastic establishments and the lineage of Śaiva ascetics in ancient Dāhāla in Madhya Pradesh on the basis of Kalacurī Inscriptions. While Krishnadeva analyses the ramifications of Śaivism in Nepal is established iconographic styles, Prabir Kumar Jha looks for the popular expressions of the Śaiva traditions in Nepal, as evidenced in forehead marks, folk songs or floral designs. Finally, M.S. Shukla discusses the interesting variations of the Devarāja cult in the deification of kings of Gods in the composite image of Śiva and the ruling king in Mukhaliñgams of south-east Asia.

A few authors move further afield to see Śaivism in its interactive contacts with the Jaina and Buddhist cults. They show how the other religions, in the very act of spurning the impact of Śaivism, are indelibly stamped by it. Lokesh Chandra discovers the Shiñgon Buddhism of Japan to be an indirect product of the influence of the Śaiva tradition transmitted through China. He illustrates this by the recreated prototypes of Umā and Maheśhwara in Japanese Buddhist iconography from early 9th century onwards. Lalit Kumar records the impact of the Śaiva traditions in the third eye, bull vehicle, matted hair of some of the Jaina Tīrthañkaras, Yaksinīs and Yoginīs. B.N. Misra shows how an initial assimilation of Mahāyānī Buddhist practices with Śaiva Kāpālika rituals is followed by the depiction of Buddhist deities asserting their superiority over Śaivite deities by brutally trampling on them.

The articles, which revolve around these themes have not been arranged with the rigid adherance to the themes suggested above. A rigorous categorisation has not been considered appropriate for presenting an account of the Śaiva tradition because its analogic significance translates itself at different levels according to differing levels of perception. As St. Augustine said about the face of Chirst, our ignorance about the true face of Śiva/Rudra is truly profound. Earlier the face was too nebulous in outline, too fluid in substance for the modelling hand of the artist. It was therefore, revealed in the Vedas more as an elemental force, both malignant and beneficent. Unlike Buddha, Śiva did not cast his shadow on the canvas in silhouette for the painter to fill it in with colours. And yet the Śiva image was conceptualised as Liñga in Yoni to express the falicity of nonduality in a millenial embrace of the person and his nature. The Coincidentia Oppositorum in this powerful symbol, or in the androgynous or Mithuna form of Hara-Gaurī, hailed as union of speech and meaning by Kalidasa, has stamped itself on our minds as the infallible characteristic of Śiva. Even when Śiva stands or sits alone, with a heroic body of arrested breath, unmarred by the blemishes of ordinary mortals, and with a peerless spiritual state, undiluted by passion or doubt, like an unflickering lamp in an windless place, he presents us with the edifying model of a harmony of contemplation and action. As such, the Śiva, in his symbolic or anthropomorphic form, is designed not merely to evoke an aesthetic catharsis, but to imply a gnosis, correspond to a prayer and create religious ardour.

Śiva Liñgas and images are infinite variations of specific types. As the Svetāśvatara Upanisad explains:

स एकोऽवर्णो बहुधा शक्तियोगाद।
वर्णाननेकान् निहितार्थो दधाति ।।

To understand the sense of wonderful decorative fitness of the phallic symbol or the poignant sense of the beauty of the human shape of Śiva, as an embodiment of exertion and beneficience, requires no mere knowledge of epistemology but a rectification of our limited, mutilated personality. This explains why the significance of the Śiva image and symbol was lost on the Western scholars until they could see parallels between Priapic, Dionysiac and Orphic rites of classical antiquity and the Indian concept of a union of creation and procreation, sacred and profane love. With this realisation of the sensual as the threshold to the suprasensual, it became possible to understand the Śiva symbol and image as instruments to transform potentially destructive forces of the unconscious psyche into helpful spirits, in a kind of nutritive dietetics or spiritual calisthenics. With the birth of modern art in the 20th century and ecstatic praise of Indian art, specially of the originality of the conception of Śiva, by great sculptors like Rodin, with a growing exposure of scholars to the meaning and function of Indian images through the work of Coomaraswamy, Havell and Kramrish, and above all, with the discovery of non-European civilizations in numerous archaeological excavations, a polygenetic relativism has become part of art appreciation. This has made it possible to comprehend the grandeur and subtlety of the Śaiva doctrine, a doctrine 'not for babes, but for sons of conquerors'.

The evolution of the Śiva images through history, with the growing fusion of contemplative fervour and physical vehemence, can probably be seen in Strzygowskian terms as the result of the dialogue of the northern, geometrical, symbolical, non-naturalistic art with the southern, naturalistic art, of line with volume. Coomaraswamy would call this process a product, not of superfical blend of styles, but of a crossing of fundamental spiritual tendencies. It is, however, only comparative mythology and religious archaeology which can truly yield the result of the encounter of civilizations in West Asia, as realised in the development of the Śiva liñgam or image. It should, therefore, be clear that to consider the Śaiva symbols without considering their form will be sensationalism, if not fetishism.

(K.K. CHAKRAVARTY)